

members of our Future Leaders Program. In parallel, we must define plans for a continuing, expanding series of pilgrimages well into the early years and decades of the 21st century.

Within two years, we can envision Journey in Faith pilgrimages beginning to generate their own income and cover their own expenses, including sponsoring future leaders, without outside financial support. As of today, we can plan two pilgrimages for this next year, the first year of the new century—and then four each year—responding to the needs and opportunities as they surely will present themselves. When we first met Scott Scherer, we learned that he had just conducted some 80 Holy Land tours the previous year, all self-financing. What is a reasonable forecast for Journey in Faith?

Our vision includes forming partnerships with a "family group" of cooperating organizations—such as those five who have joined with us in convening the summit: The International Management and Development Institute, the American Society for Law and Justice, Regents University, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and the Center for Religion and Diplomacy. All five are superb organizations whose leaders play a strong role in society.

We can anticipate co-sponsorship with Seminary and Divinity Schools—conducting Bible Lands Pilgrimages for their young men and women studying for the ministry who would have no other way to study, on site, the Scriptures as taught by Jesus Christ.

We can envision the rewards of involving young chaplains from the military academies: West Point, Annapolis, the Air Force Academy. How do we measure the value to our soldiers, and airmen stationed worldwide, prepared to defend America's vital interests against hostile attack?

While we cannot predict the potential for Journey in Faith with precision, we feel that the potential is substantial. With Paul, we can say, "For now, we see through a glass, darkly . . ." And we can also remember Paul's declaration, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

We close this assessment by reminding ourselves of the words of Jesus Christ which we quoted in our introduction. These passages stand as an inspiration and a mandate not just for His era but for ours as well: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid—freely ye have received, freely give—Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

THE MEDICAID CHILD ELIGIBILITY IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1999

HON. KEN BENTSEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 1999

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation, the Medicaid Child Eligibility Improvement Act of 1999, to help more children obtain the health care they need through Medicaid. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are currently 4.4 million children in our nation who are eligible for Medicaid but are not receiving the care they need because they are not enrolled in the program.

In Texas, according to the Texas Department of Health and Human Services Commission, there are currently 800,000 Medicaid-eli-

gible children who are not enrolled in their critical health insurance program. Without this coverage, children do not receive the preventive health services they need and deserve. Clearly, we need to do more outreach to these children and their families and encourage them to sign up for Medicaid.

This legislation would allow public schools, child care resource and referral centers, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) workers, homeless eligibility agencies, and child support agencies to make the preliminary decision that a child is eligible to enroll in Medicaid so that they can receive coverage while waiting for full Medicaid eligibility determination. Schools and these other agencies are on the front lines of caring for children and can help to educate their families and enroll them in Medicaid.

Under the Balanced Budget Act enacted in 1997, States received a new option under Medicaid to grant "presumptive eligibility" to certain children on a temporary basis as their Medicaid eligibility is determined. My legislation would expand this presumptive eligibility option to make it more flexible and attractive to the States. The presumptive eligibility period is normally sixty days and gives States sufficient time to complete the Medicaid eligibility determination process. If a state ultimately determines that the child is not eligible for Medicaid, none of these entities would be penalized or lose funding due to a negative determination. Under this legislation, we would be enrolling children on an expedited basis and could reach some of those 4.4 million children who are eligible but not enrolled.

While some would argue that there will be a cost associated with increasing participation in the Medicaid program, it is important to remember that when Congress enacted Medicaid, it assumed that these children would be covered. I would argue that adding these children is not only morally right, but also cost-effective in comparison to letting these children receive health care on an ad hoc basis. Many of these children will simply go to hospital emergency rooms for treatment and will not be able to pay for these services. In the end, we will pay the cost. With Medicaid coverage, our public institutions will be reimbursed and these children will receive better care through primary care providers instead of high-cost, emergency-care based services.

This legislation is also fiscally responsible in that it would require a state to deduct from their state allotment any funding used for this program. I believe that the small cost associated with this outreach effort will not adversely impact States' ability to provide health care for low-income children and in fact could reduce the States' disproportionate share expenditures.

We know that these children are not being properly served now and we must find innovative ways to ensure that all eligible children are enrolled in Medicaid. My legislation would simply accelerate the application process while maintaining sufficient safeguards to prevent fraud and abuse. My legislation would give states greater flexibility to determine which entities can make these determinations, and States are authorized to apply certain limitations in order to prevent fraud and abuse. My legislation would also permit the Secretary

of the Health and Human Services to review States' decisions and ensure that the appropriate entities are allowed to enroll these children. None of these entities could immediately offer these services until their state and the federal government has deemed them to be eligible to undertake preliminary determinations.

I believe this is an important public policy matter which we need to address. My legislation would enroll more children in Medicaid while ensuring that appropriate entities are reviewing these applications. I believe it is more cost-effective to enroll these children and ensure that they are receiving the primary care services they need, rather than sending these children to emergency rooms where children will be sicker and taxpayers will end up paying more. I also believe that we need to improve our current Medicaid presumptive eligibility law by including these new entities which were not included in the Balanced Budget Act. I strongly urge my colleagues to support this critical legislation and would appreciate your support for this effort.

SHANNON MELENDI

HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 1999

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I wish to share with my colleagues the tragic circumstances of a constituent, Shannon Melendi, a nineteen-year-old sophomore at Emory University.

Five years ago on March 26th, Shannon disappeared from a park where she worked. No one has seen Shannon since that day.

The prime suspect, a part-time umpire, was previously convicted of kidnapping and sexually abusing a child, but served only two years of his sentence. This was his third sexual offense.

Perhaps if this man had served his full prison sentence, Shannon would not have disappeared. Or, perhaps if he had received a harsher sentence, due to the fact that it was his third sexual offense committed against a child, Shannon would still be here today.

When sexual crimes are committed, we need to ensure that these criminals serve their full sentences so that we can be safe from sexual predators.

Shannon's father summed it up best when he said, "What happened to us cannot be changed, but because of what happened to us, changes can be made."

CELEBRATING THE 50TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY OF DAN AND BEV GANZ

HON. CAROLYN MCCARTHY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 1999

Mrs. McCarthy of New York. Mr. Speaker, March 27, 1999 marks the 50th anniversary of the wedding of Daniel M. Ganz and Beverlee